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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1267
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1130
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0444
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0446
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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1554

UNCLAS CALCUTTA 000516

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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PACOM FOR POL/AD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IN](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: NO PROGRESS DURING LATEST ROUND OF TALKS ON NAGALAND

¶1. (U) Summary. October 17-19 in Amsterdam, another round of talks between the Northeast Indian insurgent group National Socialist Council of Nagalim - Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the GOI ended without progress. The Indian delegation met the rebel leadership to discuss "substantive issues" as a follow-up to a list of demands the NSCN-IM presented in July 2006. The NSCN-IM's key demand for unification of Naga-inhabited areas into a "Greater Nagaland" -- which would include 1.2 million Nagas living in the states of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh as well -- has been opposed by the GOI. Other NSCN-IM demands included unification of all Naga-inhabited areas in Northeast India, separate representation at the United Nations, and greater control over local natural resources, finance, defense and police. GOI and the NSCN-IM have held more than 50 rounds of peace talks since their 1997 ceasefire agreement, which expires in July 2007. A resolution to one of India's oldest internal conflicts remains unlikely. End Summary.

¶2. (U) From October 17-19 a GOI delegation, including Union Ministers Oscar Fernandes, S. Raghupathy, P. Chavan and chief interlocutor K. Padmanabhaiah, met with NSCN-IM leaders in Amsterdam. Earlier this year, at the July talks in Bangkok (when the ceasefire between GOI and NSCN-IM was extended for one year), both sides had discussed the limits of flexibility within the Indian constitution and whether a "sub-national constitution" was possible. The NSCN-IM at that time proposed negotiating a federal relationship with India, through a mutually agreed settlement and a separate "Naga Constitution." The GOI held that the Indian constitution is flexible enough to accommodate regional diversities, similar to the way in which it incorporates a constitution for Jammu and Kashmir.

¶3. (U) However, the parties remained at an impasse. Speaking for the NSCN-IM's 'shadow government,' Deputy "Kilonser" (minister) for the "Kilo" (Home) Ministry V. Horam told the press that the Nagas proposed a "Federation of India and Nagalim" on the basis of a special relationship between the two parties. This would mean having two separate constitutions. The NSCN-IM is unwilling to accept a solution within the parameters of the Indian constitution. However, NSCN-IM spokesman K. Chawang said that in the Amsterdam talks, the GOI

failed to express a clear stand on the NSCM-IM's demand for a special federal arrangement that allows self-governance to Nagas. Chawang felt that this could jeopardize future peace initiatives. General Secretary of the Naga Hoho (an apex body representing all Naga tribes) N. Krome told post that the NSCN-IM rejected the GOI's proposal for a solution within the Indian constitution and that the Amsterdam talks were inconclusive.

14. (SBU) Complicating discussion with the Nagas is persistent internecine conflict between the NSCN-IM and its main rival, NSCN-Khaplang. The GOI also has a ceasefire with NSCN-Khaplang but has not engaged in discussions with that faction. On October 26, soon after the Amsterdam talks, fierce clashes between the two NSCN factions broke out in the Zunheboto district of Nagaland, reportedly resulting in three deaths. Some residents of the area had to vacate their homes to escape the violence. The fighting was a clear violation of ceasefire rules that forbid NSCN members to carry arms outside their designated camps. Observers have alleged that the Khaplang faction is tacitly backed by the Congress Party, whereas the NSCN-IM is supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies in the current Nagaland government.

15. (SBU) Comment: A resolution of the ongoing conflict is unlikely because the NSCN-IM appears unwilling to give ground on its demand for a separate and independent Nagaland. There is no real incentive for either the GOI or the Nagas to seek a substantive accord - the Naga leadership is content to enjoy the benefits of rebel political leadership (foreign travel, titular prestige) and the GOI appears unwilling to expend the resources to take on the Nagas head-on through military operations. Like India's other internal conflicts, the GOI seems to prefer letting insurgency drag on indefinitely instead of looking for a final resolution.

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